

Chairman Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW,
Washington, DC 20554

October 17, 2017

Dear Chairman Pai,

I am writing today in response to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Public Notice which, among other things, considers changes to the E-Rate program. Before delving into my response to the proposed changes, I want to thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program and for the critical programmatic and policy changes the commission adopted in 2014. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

I work at the Central Administration building as the Director of Information Technology. Our most recent demographic data shows Pampa ISD to have a student population of 3598 students. Of those students, 17.85% are of limited English proficiency, and 62.3% are economically disadvantaged. Pampa is located in the Panhandle of Texas and our main industry is oil and gas. When that industry struggles, so does our school district. Our enrollment has gone down over the last two years and this has affected funding but it has not affected the determination and spirit of our district to continue to do the very best for our students. Our E-Rate dollars are critical for us to prepare our students for the future.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. As the FCC moves forward with this public notice, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works. Any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential and ensuring the FCC remains a good steward of the changes adopted 2014, allowing those changes to progress and play out as intended.

E-Rate played a critical role in the rapid and significant expansion of connectivity in schools, and the 2014 modernization was a much needed update to ensure more schools and libraries are connected to broadband. The E-Rate's investment in Category 2 Wi-Fi and internal connections funding is extremely valuable and could not be replaced by school, district or state funds.

E-Rate Category 2 funds have been the lifeline that we need to keep our campus infrastructure as up to date as possible. This is important as technology demands keep expanding. We have four elementary campuses that are running on Cat5 internal cabling. Without Category 2 funding, we would have no way of updating these campuses in a timely manner. Software manufacturers do not base their program capacity on whether a school district can efficiently run their program. If not for additional funding, many districts would lose out on new technologies due to their lack of infrastructure readiness. The prospect of losing these funds is a huge concern.

In closing, I reiterate my district's continued, strong support for and reliance upon the E-Rate program for being able to access and afford the high-speed connectivity that is so central to our students' learning. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Melody Baker

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